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ABSTRACT

For the great number of Americans over 65 years of age, meaningful work is a central activity, whether or not an income support system is needed. Human services work, helping others, is particularly suited to many older persons. This type of work calls for education and training for those who had worked in different areas. College programs should be developed for older workers engaged in second careers, with credits granted for life experience, work experience, and previous learning in order to sharply decrease the length of time required for a degree. Entry points into education or careers should not be limited to prescribed age groups but should be open to those of all ages. Unlike the traditional picture, the growing pattern will be for persons to be engaged in a variety of activities throughout their lifetimes. School and work should be seen as operating in tandem and not sequentially. Of course, efforts to combine work and study are not new. What is new is the concern for adults as well as for youth, the use of various equivalency devices, and the particular interest in human services jobs. Some present employment programs for older workers in human service areas are cited. (MF)

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The Older American: New Work, New Training, New Careers

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Ninteen million Americans are over 65 years of age, and between 30% and 60%, depending upon the agency making the estimate and the basis of the definition, of them are poor. Only in the past several years has the country moved beyond the sense that one's older years were a time for retirement, in a sense a time to be "put out to pasture." The Older Americans Act of 1965, the special attention given to senior citizens in the 1967 Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act, the establishment of the Special Senate Committee on Aging,[1] and the introduction of the Middle Aged and Older Workers Full Employment Act of 1968, are all signs that new and needed attention is now being given to the problems and strengths of older persons.

While for some older people, as for some of those who are younger, an income support system is necessary, we believe that for the great number of older persons, as with the great number of the younger, meaningful work is a central activity. Further, it is our judgment that human services work, work of helping others, is particularly suited for many older persons. This work can be of older persons helping other older persons, as in the Senior Community Service Program, or older people helping those who are younger, as in the OEO initiated Foster Grandparents program.[2] In both areas -- helping of their peers and helping of other age groups -- the older person is called upon to make a productive contribution, to give to others, to draw upon his or her life experience of working and living with other people.[3]

For many older persons who have in their earlier years worked in a different type of activity, this human services work will be new, challenging and will require training and education. Indeed, we urge that

college programs be developed for older workers engaged in "second careers." To those who scoff at college for the older person -- the unstated argument is why the investment for someone who will soon be dead, we answer first that the older person does not look at his life that way. And, further, that the new college programs which give credit for "life experience" (the post-World War II model of credit for military service), credit for work experience (the Antioch work-study model), credit for life learnings (achievement examinations which are the college counterpart of equivalency tests), and which are tied directly into the new work done by the older person, can sharply decrease the length of time spent "in college," -- we would think no more than two and a half years, while working and earning.

We envision a society unlike the traditional picture where an individual is trained in school to do one job, does that one job for a lifetime, and then retires. Rather we think that the growing pattern will be for people to be engaged in a variety of activities over the course of a lifetime and that school and work must increasingly be seen as operating in tandem and not as sequential activities.

A concern which many have of older people working is that they cannot or do not want to work a full day, or that they are infirm, or suffer from some handicap, in short that they are "unemployable." If you will permit the word, I think that far more jobs are "unpeopleable" than people are unemployable. Of course, there are those who cannot and should not work, but we believe that a great many activities, especially in the human services area, can be <u>structured and restructured</u> to permit the

older person to engage in them. There are such activities as "friendly visitors;" persons to accompany others on trips or visits; persons to do marketing for others; persons to counsel, and advise others; persons to love, cherish, befriend others; persons to help others obtain needed services, find their way through bureaucratic mazes; persons to teach others skills, activities; older people to teach the young about the "old country," to add meaning to the pluralism of America; etc.[4]

While the boundaries between work and study are most often seen as a problem of youth, they also affect -- almost in a mirror image of their impact upon youth -- the older person. For our system most often allows a person but "one ride on the carousel," but one opportunity for protracted study and preparation for work. The system is a linear three-step process -- preparation for work, the work itself and then, retirement and/or death. Having made a commitment to a particular course of preparation and work, an individual rarely has the opportunity to enter into a new line of work. The opportunity for new preparation is rarely available under conditions necessary for adults -- continuation of income to support self and family, preparation being accomplished in relatively short order, opportunity for entrance into the new field commensurate with general experience and training. And, preparation for one field rarely has accepted carry-over value for another field.

While most attention has been given to the problem of the artificial boundary between school -- read training and education -- and work for youth, the older person faces these same barriers. The absense of training and educational opportunities for those already in the work force

ties too many people to work for which they may be ill-suited or in which they may no longer be productive or feel satisfied. This "locking in" is of course, the most serious for the nonprofessional in industry, as well as in services. Among professionals, one must imagine the (too) large number of public school teachers who, having invested sixteen to eighteen years in education, find themselves unhappy as a teacher and, yet, have no way of becoming prepared for another career. This limitation is due not only to the rigid sequence of training then work ("practice teaching" comes only at the end of the junior or senior year of college, usually too late for any change of emphasis to be initiated), but also is caused by the lack of a generic or common base of study among various fields. For what is wrong with too much of that which is called "liberal" or "general education" is not that it is academic but that it is simply irrelevant. While some persons have come to talk of the "human services" to encompass health, education, welfare, and community development activities, there is little in common in the traditional preparation for these fields. One of the rare instances of a common base of preparation for these workers is in the "generic" or "core" curriculum in many "new careers" programs where all the trainees -- whether they are to be placed in a school, hospital, police department, housing agency, etc. -- receive a common grounding in individual and community development, community history and organization, etc.

A training program involving adults needs particularly to be concerned with the issue of how long will it take. Heroic tales of persons going to night school for eight or ten years while reflecting well upon

the individual's stamina and tenacity reflect ill upon our system of adult education. Acceleration of the training process should be a function of three factors: first, a careful examination from the point of view of the work to be done, of what is necessary in the way of skills, techniques, knowledge, etc. Here the task and job analysis techniques discussed above are helpful. Second, from the point of view of the adult individual the training -- its length, perspective, site, teaching techniques -- must be responsive to adult styles, needs, and motivation. The "aging vat" function, perhaps appropriate for youth, is clearly inappropriate here and, thus, the length of time necessary to complete various programs needs carefully to be examined. Third, ways to credit learning prior to entrance into the training program must be considered. For example, course credit by examination as in the high-school equivalency programs, and the newer college credit by examination program of Educational Testing Service should be incorporated. The waiver of general education requirements by examination at some colleges, and the older University of Chicago model, are useful precedents. Greater use should be made of correspondence courses, as well as televised courses; both are particularly useful for rural areas where residential facilities may not be available. More complex is credit for work experience, for the on-the-job training and learning. A person studying to be a teacher, for example, should be granted credit toward an academic degree for previous work with children. Similarly, one would want a woman who has raised a family, as contrasted with the college undergraduate, to receive some credit -- credit, in this instance, for life experience. These techniques should make it possible for adults to obtain a baccalaureate

degree in three years or so while working full-time.

The older person, be he in the job market seeking a new position or having retired and now seeking new opportunities on a paid or voluntary basis, full or part-time, is too rich a resource to be ignored or squandered. The success of programs such as OEO's "Medicare Alert" and "Foster Grandparents" offer a model for the involvement of older persons serving other older persons as well as their serving a differing age group. An interesting Rochester, N.Y. program used retired persons, 65 to 80 years old, with children, grades 1-3, who were having school difficulties, to the childrens' profit according to teacher evaluations.[5] (Cowan, et al, "Utilization of Retired People as Mental Health Aides with children," Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXXVIII, 3 (October, 1968).) This can be possible if we think not of a single time of preparation for a single set of life work activities, but rather envision individuals having the opportunity for different careers, made possible by access to training and education throughout their lives. Other programs, many funded under the Administration on the Aging, established by the Older Americans Act, include:

--A Boulder, Colorado program where senior citizens are employed to assist elderly retarded patients at a state hospital, combining here an employment program for the elderly, combatting mental retardation, as well as serving older people.[6]

--A Winnetka, Illinois program where older adults work on a one-to-one basis with underachieving youth.[7]

--A Louisville, Kentucky program working with junior high school youngsters in individualized instruction, small group work, and remedial work.[8]

--A Fort Lauderdale, Florida program assisting teachers in some forty schools in working with disruptive children.[9]

--A Charleston, South Carolina program working with children who have been rejected by Headstart because of emotional reasons.[10]

--In Clearwater, Florida, serving in recreation, legal services, information and referral programs.[11]

--In Orleans County, Vermont, where the senior citizens keep open some twelve rural libraries.[12]

--Throughout the state of Maine in a variety of food services programs.[13]

--In Burlington, Vermont, in five different consumer education programs.[14]

--In Paintsville, Kentucky, in a six county home improvement program.[15]

--A citywide program in Portland, Oregon, with senior citizens employed in a wide range of agencies including the state employment service and university medical school, the county welfare department and council on the aging, and several private social welfare agency including the Urban League Family Counseling Service and Volunteers of America.[16]

Efforts to breach the barriers between work and study are neither new nor unique. The Soviets have espoused such programs for decades and combined work-study efforts go far back in "Voc. Ed." programs, as well as Arthur Morgan's 1930's design for Antioch College. What is new in our conception are the mechanisms of integration of work and study; in the concern for adults as well as youth the emphasis upon adult styles of life and learning; the use of various equivalency devices; and our particular interest in human services. Care in identifying what in fact is needed to do at various levels of work -- care which has not characterized much of professional practice in the human services, or indeed elsewhere -- offers an opportunity to fashion the process leading to the credential in a relevant manner, and to make it more than the present reward for "serving one's time." These programs can be available to the

older person -- in the work force or out.

* * *

What we are seeking then is a fluid society, a society which does not limit entry points into education or careers to prescribed age groups but is open to those of all ages to take up new work, to acquire the training and education to engage in new activities. Our society has been one characterized by a sharp wall between work and study. The change we seek was responds to the question in Robert Frost's poem.

> Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
> What I was walling in or walling out
> And to whom I was likely to give offense.

Footnotes

1. See the informative "Hearings before the Sub-Committee on Employment and Retirement Incomes and the Sub-committee on Federal, State and Community Service of the Elderly of the Special Committee on Aging," United States Senate, Ninetieth Congress, Second Session, 1968.

2. At present, approximately 4,000 Foster Grandparents are serving some 8,000 children in over sixty programs. The Office of Economic Opportunity estimates that the Foster Grandparents program now serves approximately 20,000 children per year.

3. One of the more intensive evaluative studies of a Foster Grandparents program, here working with institutionalized children, found that the use of the Foster Grandparents benefited not only the adults but when comparing the youngsters with whom they worked with matched pairs, the former showed greater verbal abilities, greater weight gains, and greater improvement on a comprehensive series of measure of social behavior. Recalling the suggestion that Headstart gains were only transitional, it is illuminating to note that the study reports that the gains that the children who had the benefit of the Foster Grandparents made continued to hold six and twelve months after the children no longer were in the program either because they outgrew it or were adopted. Rosalyn Saltz, "Foster-Grandparents and Institutionalized Young Children: Two Years of a Foster-Grandparent Program," Report of the Foster-Grandparent Research Project, Merrill-Palmer Institute, Detroit, September, 1968.

4. There is now a growing literature which points to the benefits to the older person of being engaged in a work project, especially those in which the elder person is helping others. For example, a project where older people worked in a nursery in Illinois, found that where only 48% of the people reported that they felt happy before the project, 90% reported that they do while involved in the project. Those who felt themselves to be useful increased from 85% to 97%, while those who felt hopeful about the future grew from 68% to 84%, and finally those who felt independent grew from 64% to 87% W.S. Rybak, J.M. Sandavitch, and B.J. Mason, "Psycho-Social Changes in Personality During Foster Grandparents Program," Journal of the American Geritrics Society, XVI, 8 (August, 1968). See also, Saltz, op cit. And a recent report contrasts those who worked as volunteers and those who worked for pay and reported that while the latter had a more favorable view of themselves, enjoyed a better relationship with others, and tended to be more satisfied with their lives than did those who did no work, the volunteers were closer in these characteristics to the non-worker than to those who worked for pay. Francis Carp, "Differences Among Older Workers, Volunteers, and Persons Who Are Neither," Journal of Gerontology, XXIII, 4 (October, 1968).

5. Cowan, et al, "Utilization of Retired People as Mental Health Aides with Children," Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXXVIII, 3 (October, 1968).

6. In order to assist the reader who might wish additional material on these projects, we shall note the funding sources and, where possible, the local contact for further information of each project noted. Title III, OAO, Stephen Chiovaro, Superintendent, Boulder River School and Hospital, Boulder, Colorado.

7. Direct AoA grant, administered by Mrs. Janice Freund, 1155 Oak St., Winnetka, Illinois.

8. Direct AoA grant to TEAM, Inc., 207 West Market Street, Louisville, Kentucky.

9. Title III, OAO grant through state agency, to Economic Opportunity Coordinating Group of Boward County, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

10. OEO funded Foster Grandparents program.

11. Title III, OAO grant to Senior Citizens Services, Inc., Clearwater, Florida.

12. Direct AoA grant administered by Donald Donnelly, 10 Main Street, Newport, Vermont.

13. Part of the National Council on the Aging's (NCOA) Senior Community Service Program, administered by Maine Division of Economic Opportunity, State House, Augusta, Maine.

14. Another NCOA project administered by the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, 80 St. Paul Street, Burlington, Vermont.

15. Another NCOA project administered by the Big Sandy Area Community Action Program, Inc., Johnson County Courthouse. Painstville, Kentucky.

16. Another NCOA project administered by the City-County Council on Aging, 516 S.W. Fourth Avenue, Portland, Oregon.

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